

RFP Questions and Clarifications Memorandum

To: Vendors Responding to RFP Number 3754 for the Mississippi Board of Cosmetology (BOC)
From: Craig P. Orgeron, Ph.D.
Date: May 8, 2014
Subject: Responses to Questions Submitted and Clarifications to Specifications
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RFP Number 3754 is hereby amended as follows:

1. **Section VII Technical Specifications, Item 2.4 is being modified to read:**

“Vendor’s examinations must state whether they are proposing a currently developed industry examination or an examination that has been developed by the Vendor. Vendor must name the manufacturer of the developed industry examination. Vendor must submit a sample of at least 3 to 5 questions per discipline of their proposed Written and Practical Examinations with their proposal response.”
2. **Section VII Technical Specification, Item 7.1.3 is being modified to read:**
“Vendor must create a Conflict of Interest Agreement addressing the following: stating the examiner will not test students from affiliate school; (Affiliate school meaning the examiner cannot test a student from the same school the examiner graduated from or currently teach at that school.) the examiner must have no school affiliation at all for 1 year prior to being considered for an examiner position; and All examiners are required to sign a non-compete that prohibits them from any school affiliation for 1 year after terminating employment. Vendor must submit the draft Conflict of Interest Agreement to BOC for review and approval prior to the examiner’s first examination.”
3. **Section VII Technical Specification, Item 7.1.7.2 is being added:**
“Vendor must contact BOC prior to denying a special accommodation request.”
4. **Section VII Technical Specification, Item 7.1.8.1 is being modified to read:**

“Computer-based Written Examinations for all disciplines; to include State Board rules and regulations.”

5. Section VII Technical Specification, Item 7.1.10 is being added:
“Vendors must agree to accommodate changes in Mississippi Law and changes in the rules and regulations adopted by the Board of Cosmetology throughout the life of the Agreement.”
6. Section VII Technical Specification, Item 7.3.5.1 is being modified to read:
“Cosmetologist Examination ~~2 hours and 15 minutes~~ 1 hour and 45 minutes.”
7. Section VII Technical Specification, Item 7.4.8 is being modified to read:
“For the Practical, ~~BOC prefers a~~ there must be a Candidate/Examiner ratio of 4:1, however BOC will accept a Candidate/Examiner ratio of 6:1. Vendor must state their proposed Candidate/Examiner Ratio. Additional consideration may be given if Vendor offers a 4:1 Candidate/Examiner ratio.”
8. Section VII Technical Specification, Item 7.5.7.1.1 is being modified to read:
“Vendor must notify the Instructor Candidate via email or ~~and~~ in writing two weeks in advance of the Subject Matter.”
9. Section VII Technical Specification, Item 7.5.8 is being modified to read:
“The Instructor Candidate will create the Practical on-site using the lesson plan book ~~on-site~~ and approved textbook. The following items should be evaluated:”
10. Section VII Technical Specification, Item 7.5.8.1 is being modified to read:
“The Instructor Candidate will randomly draw from three of the following items 12 Practical skills: NOTE: The Vendor must not repeat these three drawn skills. The Instructor Candidate must draw three new skills for the next test date.”
11. Section VII Technical Specification, Item 7.9.2.11 is being added:
“Address how the Instructor Candidate must give a hard copy of their Theory presentation to the examiner on the day of Instructor Candidate’s Instructor Practical.”
12. Section VII Technical Specifications, Item 3 Project Schedule is amended as follows:

Task	Date
Deadline for Questions Answered and Posted to ITS Web Site	05/08/14
Open Proposals	05/20/14
Begin Evaluation of Proposals	05/21/14
Vendor Onsite or Web Presentations	06/09/14
<u>Notice of Award</u>	<u>06/23/14</u>
Task	Date
Begin Contract Negotiations	06/23/14
Testing to Begin at Test Sites	TBD

Vendor must include in their proposal a response to each amended requirement as listed above. Vendor must respond using the same terminology as provided in the original requirements.

The following questions were submitted to ITS and are being presented as they were submitted, except to remove any reference to a specific vendor. This information should assist you in formulating your response.

Question 1: Section VII - 2 – Page 32

2.3 – Vendor must not allow or accept money/voucher from a Candidate or on behalf of a Candidate to take a Written Examination or Practical without an official approval letter from BOC.

Would the BOC be acceptable to approving the testing applicants (1st time and retake applicants) in a Board Approval Portal provided by the Vendor in lieu of the approval letters being prepared, printed and mailed by the BOC to the applicants? This would be a secure Portal that is only accessible by the appointed BOC staff and once applicant is approved or not approved the Portal transfers the information to the testing candidate's record in Vendor's database. No candidate can be approved to test or scheduled to test until the BOC has issued the approval. This method of Board Approval lifts a substantial burden from the BOC of issuing approval letters to all candidates. In the event that a candidate will not be approved to test a refund of their examination fee would be issued.

Response: At this time BOC prefers to continue with their Approval Letter process.

Question 2: Section 2.4 states that "Vendor must submit a sample of their proposed Written and Practical Examinations with their proposal response." Since examination content is proprietary, can vendors supply content outlines for each examination offered and then, upon award, provide the Board an opportunity to review the content in a secured manner?

Response: Refer to Amendment Number 1. As part of the Onsite Vendor or Web Presentations, BOC may request to see additional samples.

Question 3: Section VII - 3 – Page 33

Current Process for Candidates to Take Examinations

Once a Candidate has successfully completed their courses their School will submit to BOC the Candidate's Final Hour Report. The Candidate must submit an Examination Approval Form to the BOC. Once BOC approves the Candidate to take their exam an Approval Letter is sent to the Candidate. The Candidate can register, schedule and pay on-line or by telephone with the current Vendor to take their Written and/or Practical Examination. BOC doesn't handle the registration process or receive any payment from the fees collected by the current Vendor. The current Vendor allows vouchers to be purchased for future use.

On the day of testing, the Candidate must present to the Testing Administrator their Approval Letter from the BOC. Candidate is then permitted to take either the Written Examination or the Practical depending on which exam they scheduled to take first. If the Approval Letter is not presented on the day of their exam, the

Candidate will be turned away by the Testing Administrator and forfeit their exam fee.

Once the Candidate has taken the computerized Written Examination, the results are sent to BOC within 24 – 48 hours. If the Candidate fails the Written Examination for the first time, Candidate must request and receive another Approval Letter from BOC. After receipt of the Approval Letter, there is no waiting period from the time of the first failed Written Examination to the retake of the second or third Written Examination. (NOTE: Candidate can still take the Practical even though they failed the Written Examination.)

Once the Candidate receives the BOC Approval Letter, Candidate can then register, schedule and pay on-line or by telephone to retake the Written Examination for the second and/or third time. The Candidate must present a new BOC Approval Letter each time to the Testing Administrator on the day of their scheduled retake examination or they will be turned away and forfeit their exam fee.

Would the BOC be acceptable to approving the testing applicants (1st time and retake applicants) in a Board Approval Portal provided by the Vendor in lieu of the approval letters being prepared, printed and mailed by the BOC to the applicants? This would be a secure Portal that is only accessible by the appointed BOC staff and once applicant is approved or not approved the Portal transfers the information to the testing candidate's record in Vendor's database. No candidate can be approved to test or scheduled to test until the BOC has issued the approval. This method of Board Approval lifts a substantial burden from the BOC of issuing approval letters to all candidates. In the event that a candidate will not be approved to test a refund of their examination fee would be issued.

Response: Refer to the response in Question #1.

Question 4: The RFP sets forth candidate volumes for calendar years 2013 and 2012. It is noted that there is a significant drop in volume in 2013's volume. Is there a reason for the significant drop in volume from 2012's volume or are the 2013 volumes inaccurate? This is important to clarify as we attempt to determine costs for future years. Does the BOC anticipate a further decline in 2014 or 2015?

Response: a) BOC gave an extension to those Candidates that were approved in Calendar Year 2011 to take their examinations in 2012. Calendar Year 2013 is more of the norm and a true picture of the number of Candidates that take their examinations.

b) BOC cannot guarantee the number of candidates that will apply and take their examinations.

Question 5: Are there any reasons that the candidate pools shrunk approximately 30% from 2012 to 2013?

Response: Refer to the response to Question # 4.

Question 6: RFP page 36, Section VII, Procurement Project Schedule – Can the State please clarify the date for which an intent to award will be made?

Response: Refer to Clarification Number 12 of this Memorandum.

Question 7: When does ITS expect to begin testing?

Response: Refer to Technical Requirements, Section VII Item 5.3 of the RFP.

Question 8: Historically, how many reciprocity applicants for licensure do you have annually that have taken the NIC examination in another jurisdiction?

Response: That information is not provided by all states through certification, therefore BOC does not track this data.

Question 9: Section VII - 7.1 – Page 38

7.1.3 - Vendor must create a Conflict of Interest Agreement stating the examiner will not test students from affiliate school. (Affiliate school meaning the examiner cannot test a student from the same school the examiner graduated from or currently teach at that school.) Vendor must submit the draft Conflict of Interest Agreement to BOC for review and approval prior to the examiner's first examination.

Would the BOC be acceptable to our current procedure whereas an examiner must have no school affiliation at all for 1 year prior to being considered for an examiner position? All examiners are also required to sign a non-compete that prohibits them from any school affiliation for 2 years after terminating employment. Additionally, candidates are pre-assigned in a confidential manner so that the examiners do not know what school they attended and the candidates are not permitted to have any markings of their school affiliation on their clothing or kit.

Response: Refer to Amendment Number 2 of this Memorandum.

Question 10: 7.1.4 - Vendor must attend quarterly status meetings with BOC Board to provide updates.

Can updates be provided via conference call for some of the BOC Board Meetings or does the BOC require Vendor to meet in person for all quarterly meetings?

Response: Vendor can attend these meetings via conference or on-site. However, should BOC feel there is a problem or a need then the Vendor must appear in person at the request of BOC.

Question 11: According to 7.1.7 it states that "The Vendor must grant special accommodations for Candidates pursuant to American Disabilities Act (ADA)." Will the board be responsible for processing and/or approving/denying requests for special accommodations? Or will this be a responsibility of the successful vendor?

Response: a) It will not be BOC's responsibility to process and/or approve requests for special accommodations. Refer to Amendment Number 3 of this Memorandum.

b) This will be the Vendor's responsibility. Refer to the response to Question # 11a above.

Question 12: Section VII - 7.3 – Page 43

7.3.6 - Vendor must initially mail the Candidate's Written Examination results to the Candidate within two weeks of Candidate completing the test. As a follow up, Vendor may email the Candidate's Written Examination results.

Would the BOC be acceptable to result letters being provided on a secure Result Letter Portal where candidates may log in using their assigned candidate number and password to view and print their result letter?

Response: Vendor must initially mail the Candidate's Written Examination results. However, if the Vendor has a Result Letter Portal they may also allow the Candidate to view their results.

Question 13: Section 7.3.5 - 7.3.5.4 states that "Vendor must allow Candidates a maximum time limit for the following written examinations....." and then sets forth the required maximum time limits. Should the BOC accept national examination content outlines that has a timeline of 90 minutes that includes all core sections of each written examination, but then allows additional time for state specific examination questions, will that be acceptable to the BOC?

Response: Refer to Amendment Number 6 of this Memorandum.

Question 14: Section VII - 7.3 – Page 43

7.3.7- Vendor must initially mail the Candidate's Written Examination results to the Candidate's school within 30 days after completing the test. As a follow up, Vendor may email the Candidate's Written Examination results.

Would the BOC be acceptable to school reports being provided on a secure School Portal where school officials may log in using their assigned school code number and password to view and print their school's School Reports?

Response: Refer to response to Question # 1 above.

Question 15: The RFP states ITS would like the Vendor to mail the candidates' written exam results and practical exam results within 30 days of taking the exam. Would the State be willing to have candidates receive these results within the requested 30 days via an online reporting system rather than a mailed report?

Response: Refer to response to Question # 12 above.

Question 16: The RFP states ITS would like the Vendor to notify the Instructor Candidates via email and in writing two weeks in advance of the Subject Matter. Would the State allow this notification to be posted online for Instructor Candidates to view?

Response: Refer to Amendment Number 8 of this Memorandum.

Question 17: It is noted that the written examinations the BOC currently use have state specific questions included in each examination, but do not see within the RFP that this is a requirement. Could you please clarify what the requirements are and, if required, whether the state specific questions are all related to rules and regulations of the State?

Response: **It is the State rules and regulations. Refer to Amendment Number 4 of this Memorandum.**

Question 18: Section VII - 7.4 – Page 44
7.4.8- For the Practical, there must be a Candidate/Examiner Ratio of 4:1.

Would the BOC be acceptable to the industry standard Candidate/Examiner Ratio of 8:1?

Response: **Refer to Amendment Number 7 of this Memorandum.**

Question 19: Section VII - 7.5 – Page 45 - 46
7.5.1- Instructor Candidates must have the option of using Microsoft PowerPoint during their Theory. Awarded Vendor must provide projection equipment to include a PC or laptop for the Instructor Candidate to use to present their Theory. (NOTE: Instructor Candidate will bring their PowerPoint Presentation on some form of electronic media.

Would the BOC permit the Vendor stipulating the versions of PowerPoint that are compatible with the laptop that will be provided to avoid issues with versions that may not be compatible?

May the Vendor make a copy of the Instructor Candidate's presentation to refer to in the event the Instructor Candidate challenges their examination results?

Response: **a) Yes.**

b) Refer to Amendment Number 11 of this Memorandum.

Question 20: Can the BOC clarify what is meant in Section 7.5.8 by "The Instructor Candidate will create the Practical 'on-site' using the lesson plan book and approved Textbook and that the Candidate will draw from three of the following (7.5.8.1.1 - 7.5.8.1.12?

Response: **Refer to Amendment Numbers 9 and 10 of this Memorandum.**

Question 21: Section VII - 7.9 – Page 50
7.9.2.4- Vendor must address the Candidate bringing their current passport photo and Government issued photo ID on the day of Candidate's Practical Examination.

Would the BOC permit the Vendor to require the candidate to send their photo and a copy of their Photo Identification when they submit their application? The photo and copy of their ID are scanned into the Vendor's database and are

printed on the candidate's admission letter. The photo and photo ID would also be transmitted electronically to the BOC in a format that is indicated by the BOC.

Response: **No. Refer to Section VII Technical Requirements Items 7.3.2.8 and 7.3.4.1 as well as 7.5.2.7 and 7.5.3.1.**

Question 22: Will the BOC permit paper and pencil examinations to be administered at the correctional center site?

Response: **Yes.**

Question 23: RFP page 51, Section VII, Paragraph 8.2 – This appears to be a new requirement. However, Section III, Paragraph 11 (Price Changes During Award or Renewal Period) has not been revised to reflect the changes made to the Cost Requirements. Can the State please clarify?

Response: **Once the State has conducted the RFP Proposal Opening, Vendors are not allowed to add to or increase their proposed pricing. Vendors may include proposed price increases to be invoked in the event the awarded contract is renewed after the initial contract period.**

Question 24: Is ITS willing to conduct development meetings for the exams via webinar/phone conference?

Response: **BOC is not willing to participate in development meeting for the exams as it is the Vendor's sole responsibility in the development of the examinations.**

Question 25: Will references from clients with similar scope other than specifically cosmetology be considered?

Response: **No, refer to Section IX References Item 1.3.2.**

Question 26: Does all content of practical exams have to match exactly as outlined in the RFP or can it be modified based on job analysis and other information?

Response: **Yes, the content of the Practical exam must match as stated in the RFP.**

Question 27: Written Exam: Do all of the test questions have to be original questions?

Response: **The State is unsure of what it meant by original question. Refer to Section VII Technical Specifications Item 2.4.**

Question 28: Written Exam: How many questions will the written exam consist of?

Response: **It is the Vendor's responsibility to provide the detail of the examinations to BOC.**

Question 29: Written Exam: Is ITS willing to use an exam that has been previously developed and owned by the testing Vendor and not available for ownership by the State?

Response: Yes, as long as the Written Examination contains questions specific to Mississippi's Rules and Regulations.

Question 30: [Our] experience is that authorizing candidates electronically dramatically reduces problems in the field related to candidates' forgetting or losing their authorization letters. Is the BOC willing to consider an electronic eligibility process where the vendor is provided a periodic file that can be used to authorize candidates to test?

Response: Refer to the response to Question #1.

Question 31: What form and method is used to transfer candidate results to BOC? Is a sample layout available?

Response: a) Currently, BOC accesses the Candidate's results via the Vendor's secure site.

b) No.

Question 32: Would a customized examination from an existing item bank be acceptable to the Board? The examination would be based either on Mississippi's current content outlines or on a recent job analysis in another jurisdiction.

Response: Refer to the response to Question # 29.

Question 33: Will the Board accept a national examination, such as from NIC (along with cut scores, time allowed, and other parameters) in lieu of the current detailed outlines?

Response: No.

Question 34: How many questions must be submitted to qualify as a sample written examination? Are these test items required for each profession?

Response: a) Refer to Amendment Number 1 of this Memorandum.

b) Refer to Amendment Number 1 of this Memorandum.

Question 35: Would our corporation be required to register to do business in the State of Mississippi even if our main location is located out of state?

Response: Foreign corporations (those that are incorporated in states other than Mississippi) must qualify to do business in Mississippi with the Mississippi Secretary of State. Domiciled corporations (those that are in Mississippi) must incorporate by first reserving the corporate name with the Mississippi Secretary of State (MSOS) and then filing articles of incorporation. Limited

Liability Corporations are also required to register with the Secretary of State. For more information, Vendors may contact the MSOS at 601-359-1350 or visit their website:

http://www.sos.ms.gov/business_services_business_formation.aspx
http://www.sos.ms.gov/links/business/bus_formation/Out_of_State_Businesses.pdf

Question 36: Do we need to obtain Foreign Corporation status from the Secretary of State to have authorization do business in the state of Mississippi?

Response: Refer to the response in Question # 35 above.

Question 37: Does our corporation need to register with the Department of Taxation to pay sales tax and/or income tax in the state of Mississippi?

Response: Yes, the corporation must register with the Mississippi Secretary State's Office as well as the Department of Revenue as a business.
http://dor.ms.gov/docs/income_partIII09072012.pdf.

RFP responses are due May 20, 2014, at 3:00 p.m. (Central Time).

If you have any questions concerning the information above or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Tangela Harrion at 601-432-8112 or via email at Tangela.Harrion@its.ms.gov.

cc: ITS Project File Number 40290